

NATIONAL
FEDERATION
OF FEDERAL
EMPLOYEES



1016 16th St., N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC
20036
(202) 862-4400

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STATEMENT

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NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES

BEFORE

THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL SERVICES,

POST OFFICE & CIVIL SERVICE

SENATE GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ON FEDERAL EMPLOYEE LEAVE BANKS

MARCH 18, 1988

Mr. Chairman and Subcommittee Members:

On behalf of the National Federation of Federal Employees, which represents over 150,000 Federal workers across the nation, I appreciate the opportunity to present our views on the concept of leave sharing for Federal employees. I commend you, Mr. Chairman, for your attention to this important issue, and look forward to working with you and the Subcommittee to develop a model leave sharing bank for Federal workers.

I am delighted that you have chosen this moment to examine the viability of leave banks for Federal workers, because clearly, a serious need for this legislation exists in the Federal Government. We are fortunate to live in an era when medical technology has progressed to the point that many who would previously have died of dread diseases are now able to recover and lead productive lives. The physical cost is often a gruelling series of treatments and rehabilitation sessions. But it is the financial costs, even with the best insurance policies, that can provide the hardest burden for the employee and his or her family. The loss of income associated with an extended recovery period can be, and too often is, an insurmountable burden for too many Federal employees.

Last summer, the Federal Employees Education and Assistance Fund, of which NFFE is a charter member, presented a check for \$1,500 to Frances Scott, an employee at the Naval Observatory. Ms. Scott was on extended leave without pay because of cancer and had previously been on leave without pay in order to care for her daughter who had also become seriously ill. While FEEA was pleased to be able to help Ms. Scott in this manner, the \$1,500 couldn't go as far as we wished. If Ms. Scott has been eligible for the benefits of a leave bank, her financial burden might have been lessened considerably.

Unfortunately, NFFE suspects that Ms. Scott's story is repeated year after year, in Federal installations around the country. Employees whose needs are well known to their co-workers can't receive the help those co-workers are willing to give because of restrictions against leave transfers. And while "passing the hat" for an ill co-worker can provide some assistance, few employees can afford the cash value of an entire day's paycheck, while the donation of one day of leave might be entirely within the co-workers' ability to provide.

NFFE has two suggestions for any legislation on Federal employee leave banks that may be introduced as a result of this hearing. First, it is important that employees covered by a negotiated agreement be able to participate in the leave bank as soon as the enacting legislation is signed. To ensure this participation, we suggest that language be drafted so that the leave bank policy is considered a mandatory subject of bargaining. In this way, Local

unions could bargain with management according to the specific needs at the worksite, enabling all employees to participate in this benefit while preserving the pre-eminence of the negotiated agreement.

NFFE's second concern is that regulations concerning eligibility for the benefits of the leave bank be structured in such a way that favoritism would be impossible. Allowing the agency to consider the likely impact on morale and efficiency when reviewing a worker's request for leave needed for reasons other than the worker's own illness could open the door for favoritism.

On Tuesday, March 15, the House passed HR 3981, legislation introduced by Representative Gary Ackerman (D-NY) that would correct the ethics prohibition against subordinates donating items of value (i.e. leave) to superiors. Another bill by Mr. Ackerman, HR 3757, would extend the current temporary leave sharing program for three years. This legislation has been passed unanimously by the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee, and should be considered by the entire House in the near future. Both of these bills have NFFE's support and could provide the Subcommittee with an excellent starting point for formulating a permanent leave bank for Federal workers.

That concludes my statement. I will be happy to answer any questions.